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TAGS: PGOV ECON EINV ELAB PHUM CH

SUBJECT: SOCIAL STABILITY IN JIANGSU: NANJING SCHOLARS OFFER
DIFFERENT VIEWS

REF: A. (A) SHANGHAI 28
1B. (B) CPP200901064560004
1C. (C) BEIJING 186
1D. (D) 08 BEIJING 750
1E. (E) SHANGHAI 39
1F. (F) 08 SHANGHAI 547

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CONSULATE SHANGHAI, DEPARTMENT OF STATE.

REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

Summary

11. (C) Two prominent political scholars in Nanjing, Jiangsu's provincial capital, offered different views on social stability in Jiangsu, where migrant workers from the rural northern part of the province may not be able to find jobs in developed southern Jiangsu after the Lunar New Year. The scholars agreed that Premier Wen Jiabao is taking much of the blame for China's economic downturn, but they differed on the degree to which Wen is facing political troubles. The 08 Charter did not have a significant short-term impact in East China, they said, but one scholar believes the Charter will be viewed as an important development in the long run. End Summary.

Social Stability in Jiangsu

12. (C) Gu Su, professor of Philosophy and Law at Nanjing University, and Lu Xiaobo, professor of Public Affairs at the Hopkins-Nanjing Center for Chinese and American Studies, both said Jiangsu Province potentially faces a social stability problem because migrant workers from northern Jiangsu may become dissatisfied if they are not able to return to jobs in the southern part of the province after the Lunar New Year. Lu, a native of Taizhou in northern Jiangsu, told Poloff Jiangsu Province is unique in this regard because migrant worker sending and receiving areas are in the same province. While provinces such as neighboring Zhejiang can send migrants back to distant homes in Central or Western China, local governments in Jiangsu must provide aid to migrant workers in northern Jiangsu who have lost their jobs in the southern part of the province (see also Refs A and B).

13. (C) Limited available land in Jiangsu Province also will create problems for localities trying to reabsorb returned migrant workers into the rural sector (see Ref C). Given current economic realities, Lu said, the Central Government's Number One Document (NOD) will need to focus on rural development for the sixth year in a row (Ref D) in order to address the problem of unemployed migrant workers.

¶ 14. (C) Gu and Lu differed, however, on the potential for serious social instability problems in the near- to medium-term. Lu told Poloff that despite the economic challenges, he does not foresee large-scale social problems in Jiangsu. On the other hand, Gu was pessimistic, stating "something definitely will happen." Jiangsu's urban areas, including Nanjing, are, like Shanghai (Ref E), focusing particularly on unemployed university students. Gu told Poloff there has been much discussion in the academic community recently about the possibility of unhappy university graduates "who can write," inspiring large numbers of migrant workers to protest, which would be a disaster for the leadership.

Nanjing's View of Central Government Leadership

¶ 15. (C) According to Gu, the perception in East China is that Premier Wen Jiabao is under a lot of pressure from both reformists and hardliners in the Party who are blaming him for China's current economic slowdown. Gu said President Hu Jintao is distancing himself from Wen, but at the same time, China's economic policies (including the Scientific Development Concept) are viewed domestically as originating from the "Hu-Wen team," so Hu cannot live without Wen. Increasingly, however, Gu said provincial officials such as Shanghai Municipal Party Secretary Yu Zhengsheng, Chongqing Municipal Party Secretary Bo Xilai, and Guangdong Provincial Party Secretary Wang Yang are challenging Wen on economic policies. Gu pointed out that a photo prior to the Lunar New Year in the Shanghai media of Yu with migrant workers was solely for the benefit of Wen. In reality, the Shanghai Municipal Government will continue to pay more attention to university graduate employment than to migrant worker issues, Gu said.

¶ 16. (C) On the other hand, Lu downplayed any rift between Wen and provincial leaders or the possibility that Wen is in political trouble. According to Lu, Wen has been criticized, but any conjecture that he would be replaced prior to the end of his term is ridiculous. It is true that if the economic situation worsens, there will be a growing perception that the Central Government has mismanaged the situation, but the government's basic economic policy still is not likely to change.

The "08 Charter" in Jiangsu

¶ 17. (C) In the context of economic challenges and political leadership concerns, the Central Government is worried about the "08 Charter" (Ref F), both scholars said. However, there was little support for the Charter in Jiangsu. Lu told Poloff the Charter's impact would be minimal and was not "too influential." Gu, however, said the short-term impact might be small, but in the long run, observers will look back and say the 08 Charter was an important development.

¶ 18. (C) Gu claimed he had seen an earlier draft of the 08 Charter that was "too violent" and too long, and he believes the final "streamlined" version was more appropriate to China's current socio-economic situation. Unfortunately, Gu said, few people in Jiangsu signed the Charter. Gu, who also did not sign, offered two reasons for the lack of support: (1) because many of the province's activists left China after Tiananmen, and (2) Jiangsu's provincial government is more effective at distributing social and economic benefits than other provincial governments.